Testimony before the Commission on the National Guard and Reserves

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A Statement by

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Today, the National Guard and parts of the Reserves are under enormous strain. This strain has the potential to do real damage to the long-term health of the force unless the United States changes how we use, structure and manage our reserve component forces. While the emergence of a more operational reserve is a reality that is here to stay, we have yet to fully understand or articulate what will be required – in terms of manpower, equipment, training, force management, and compensation and benefits – to make this new paradigm work over time. The starting point for any consideration of these issues should be a back to basics discussion of the appropriate roles and missions of the Guard and Reserves in the future. So I applaud the premise and focus of the Commission's first set of formal hearings.

Much of my testimony today is drawn from work that is ongoing at CSIS, particularly the Future of the National Guard and Reserves Study that is being led by my colleague, Christine Wormuth. In this study, we are examining everything from future roles and missions to how the social compact between the U.S. government and reservists must evolve, to "organize, train and equip" issues. The study will be completed in June, and we look forward to sharing our results with the Commission as we finalize our findings and recommendations.

Strains on the Force: Something Must Change

I'd like to begin with some basic facts:

- More than 95% of the Army National Guard's combat battalions and all but one of its 10 special operations units have been mobilized since 9/11.
- Short of full mobilization, there is little or no combat capacity remaining in the Army National Guard that could be available for deployment, without the President declaring a new emergency.
- Only 16% of the Army Reserve remains eligible for mobilization to support operations in Iraq and Afghanistan under current authorities, but many of the remaining specialties are not in demand.
- All of the Marine Corps Reserve's combat units have been mobilized.
- Meanwhile, the average length of tour for reservists has more than doubled, from 156 days in Desert Shield/Desert Storm to 342 days in OEIF/OIF.
- The Navy Reserve fell about 12% short of its annual recruiting target for 2005, the Army Reserve about 16% short, the Air Guard about 14% short, and the Army Guard about 20% short.
- Of particular concern is the downward trend in Army Reserve end strength for FY2005-06. Current authorized and budgeted end strength is 205K, but actual end strength is only about 190K. The Army Reserve now projects increased losses of personnel, which will make achieving its FY2006 end strength target extremely difficult.
- Although in the past few months Army National Guard recruiting and retention have begun to improve, end strength is still more than 10K short of its authorized level of 350K.
- While the Army Reserve and Army National Guard exceeded their retention goals for careerists, they fell substantially short of their goals for those deciding

whether to renew their commitment for the first time, creating potential long-term imbalances in the force.

These facts paint a sobering picture of Guard and Reserve forces stretched thin. They also suggest that the current tempo of operations is not sustainable without substantial changes to how we use, structure and manage the Guard and Reserves.

The Operational Reserve: A New Reality

Since the end of the Cold War, the National Guard and Reserves have evolved from being a strategic reserve to an operational reserve. That is, they have gone from being forces in reserve for a major war or national emergency to forces that regularly support and provide a rotation base for the operations of the active duty military at home and abroad. This shift has happened over time and in different ways within each of the Services, but the trend accelerated sharply after 9/11. Indeed, the number of duty days per year for Reservists has soared from 0.9 M in the mid-1980s, to 13.5 M in the mid-1990s to 63.1 M in current operations in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere.

The real question is whether the operational reserve model is here to stay. Some would prefer to see the Reserves revert to a strategic reserve once operations in Iraq conclude. But I believe this is unrealistic for a couple of reasons. First, demand for U.S. military forces is likely to remain high for the foreseeable future. Even after U.S. force levels in Iraq decrease somewhat, we can still expect to see U.S. forces engaged in operations to destroy terrorist organizations, deny them safe haven, and fight insurgencies in various countries; deter and, if necessary, defeat aggression against U.S. allies and interests around the world; help to establish and maintain stability in key regions; counter the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to both state and non-state actors; work with the militaries of other countries, and with multilateral and international organizations, to build their capacities for these missions; and defend the U.S. homeland and help respond to disasters, both manmade and natural, here at home. The bottom line is that the level of demand for U.S. forces post-9/11 is likely to be higher than it was in the 1990s.

Second, budgetary, demographic and recruiting realities will preclude a major expansion of the active duty military in the near term. In this context, the reserves continue to offer a cost-effective way to rapidly expand the pool of available military forces in crisis or war while sustaining critical links between the U.S. military and the American people. This means that the active component will continue to rely heavily on the reserves, both as a provider of critical combat support and combat service support capabilities and as a rotation base for long duration missions.

The challenge, therefore, is to figure out how to make the operational reserve model work. The Army Reserve and Army National Guard have proposed putting their forces on a rotation-based footing which would ensure that units would deploy no more than once every five or six years. To be viable, this new paradigm will require several changes:

- Additional investment in equipment, training and perhaps manning, commensurate with the increased levels of readiness required.
- A greater depth of support capabilities within the Guard, both to support the new modular brigades and to enhance the Guard's capacities for civil support missions, like the response to Hurricane Katrina.
- Developing a new social compact between the U.S. government and our "citizen soldiers" that clarifies both the new expectations of a more operational reserve and the government's obligations to those who are serving under this new construct.
- Greater clarity on the appropriate roles and missions for the National Guard and Reserves.

Rethinking Roles and Missions

Any discussion of roles and missions must start with some assumptions about the future security environment. Here, I think that the National Intelligence Council's recent assessment and the 2006 QDR Report provide a reasonable foundation on which to build. The QDR argues that future demand for U.S. military forces is likely to span a broad range of missions – from high-intensity combat operations and stability and reconstruction operations to counterterrorism and homeland defense. I believe we need to prepare and resource reserve forces that are capable of conducting a wide variety of operations. That is, our reserve forces need to remain multi-mission capable like their active duty counterparts. What needs to change is the relative emphasis given to some missions over others. In the past, the emphasis was on supporting combat operations in major theater wars. In the future, I believe the emphasis needs to be on supporting longer duration missions like stability operations abroad and, for the Guard, also meeting homeland defense and civil support requirements here at home. These are missions to which Reserve Component forces can make invaluable contributions given the civilian as well as military skills they can bring to bear.

Given its history, deep ties to local communities and geographic dispersal across the United States, the National Guard remains the force of choice to undertake critical homeland defense missions and to provide military support to civil authorities. The National Guard is ideally suited for steady state missions at home like air defense as well as domestic crisis response missions like consequence management and WMD incident response. The Department of Defense needs to better define the roles and missions of the National Guard in homeland defense and civil support, and the Guard needs to conduct an in-depth assessment of how its organization, training, equipment and force management approaches need to change to meet the associated requirements.

To date, however, the National Guard and Reserves have not been adequately prepared or resourced for these indispensable roles. One of the critical challenges ahead is to determine how Guard units can balance the requirement to be ready for overseas missions for one year out of every six while also meeting their unique homeland defense and civil support requirements. Funding a more operational reserve will also be a challenge. A full accounting of the costs associated with the additional training,

equipping and perhaps manning that will be required by the operational reserve paradigm does not appear to have been undertaken in support of recent budget requests. In short, we can expect a substantial bill associated with the new roles, missions and readiness levels envisioned – we just don't know how big the bill will be.

Rebalancing the Force

Throughout the post-Cold War period, and increasingly since 9/11, the U.S. military has experienced a mismatch between the capabilities it inherited from the Cold War and the capabilities it needs to deal with emerging threats. The mix of capabilities resident in the force needs to be fundamentally rebalanced for the future. The Services, particularly the Army, have launched substantial and welcome rebalancing initiatives. For example, the Services have already converted some 70,000 positions from low demand specialties like air defense and field artillery to high demand specialties like military police and civil affairs. The plan is to rebalance another 55,000 by 2011. This is essential to reducing the most acute strains on the force.

In addition, Secretary Rumsfeld has sought to reduce the need for involuntary mobilizations by seeking to move more of the capabilities that would be needed in the first 15-30 days of the military's response to a crisis into the active force. This makes sense, but only to a point. Since it is far more cost effective to keep capabilities in the reserves, only those capabilities that we will continue to need on a routine basis in the future should be moved to the active component. In addition, it is imperative that our armed forces remain structured so as to preserve the essential link between the military and the body politic – to ensure that any President must mobilize substantial numbers of America's "citizen soldiers" in order to go to war. Maintaining this link should remain a fundamental design principle of the U.S. armed forces.

What is most needed is a new system for preparing, deploying, and resetting these forces that improves their availability to the nation while also enhancing predictability and stability for soldiers and their families. ARFORGEN aspires to be such a system for the Army Reserve and Guard. But it may not be enough. Of particular interest here is the "continuum of service" concept being developed in the Pentagon, which would expand the range of service opportunities available to reservists beyond the standard 39 days per year model. In particular, one way of gaining greater access to frequently needed reserve capabilities short of moving them into the AC is to pursue the idea of Variable Pool Reserve Units (VPRU), in which some reserve units would be commit, on a volunteer basis, to higher levels of readiness and utilization than their 39 days/year counterparts.

In addition, rebalancing should take maximum advantage of technology and services offered by the private sector to make the best use of our military personnel. In today's military, there are a number of opportunities where incorporating the latest information technology and "working smarter" could substantially reduce manpower requirements. In addition, because military personnel are becoming a scarce commodity and because, over their careers, they are more than twice as expensive as their civilian

counterparts, we cannot afford to have military personnel performing jobs that could be performed just as well by civilians. Although a good deal of military-civilian conversion and "outsourcing" has already occurred, it has been pursued in a fairly ad hoc manner, sometimes with unintended consequences. DoD needs to rethink how it is using contractors on the battlefield, especially when civilian security forces bleed off skilled U.S. military personnel, while also being more creative about outsourcing non-battlefield tasks that do not have to be performed by someone in uniform

More broadly, the U.S. government needs to pursue a degree of rebalancing at the interagency level, building deployable operational capacity in key civilian agencies like the State Department to conduct critical tasks for which the U.S. military does not have a comparative advantage. Such capacity should include a substantial cadre of full-time professionals who are deployable on a non-volunteer basis for rotations of at least a year, as well as a reserve of on-call experts from outside the U.S. government and substantial contracting authorities to access private sector capabilities. The U.S. also needs to encourage the development of greater international capacity to conduct complex missions like stabilization and reconstruction. In the absence of capable civilian partners in the field, the military is doomed to experience mission creep and no viable exit strategy, and the nation will be saddled with much higher risks and costs.

Conclusion: Some Tough Questions for the Commission

In conclusion, let me leave you with a number of questions to wrestle with as you continue your work:

- Will the various reserve components be able to recruit and retain enough personnel to man their planned force structure?
- Will they be able to build enough capacity to implement their proposed rotation cycles?
- Will this frequency of mobilization be acceptable to reservists?
- What are the manning, equipping and training requirements and costs of fully implementing a more operational reserve paradigm?
- Should there be a separate reserve component dedicated to homeland defense and civil support missions?
- Are planned capabilities adequate to deal with a catastrophic attack or disaster here at home?
- How much of a strategic reserve should we have in place for unforeseen contingencies abroad?
- Does the social compact between DoD and the Guard and Reserves need to change in light of the requirements associated with the operational reserve, and what is the right balance between increasing benefits and controlling costs?

We at CSIS are wrestling with these same issues – and we are still in the process of formulating our own answers to them. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on these critical issues and to contribute to your deliberations.